

CHAPTER TEN



THE MARAUDER'S MAP

Madam Pomfrey insisted on keeping Harry in the hospital wing for the rest of the weekend. He didn't argue or complain, but he wouldn't let her throw away the shattered remnants of his Nimbus Two Thousand. He knew he was being stupid, knew that the Nimbus was beyond repair, but Harry couldn't help it; he felt as though he'd lost one of his best friends.

He had a stream of visitors, all intent on cheering him up. Hagrid sent him a bunch of earwiggy flowers that looked like yellow cabbages, and Ginny Weasley, blushing furiously, turned up with a get-well card she had made herself, which sang shrilly unless Harry kept it shut under his bowl of fruit. The Gryffindor team visited again on Sunday morning, this time accompanied by Wood, who told Harry (in a hollow, dead sort of voice) that he didn't blame him in the slightest. Ron and Hermione left Harry's bedside only at night. But nothing anyone said or did could make Harry feel any better, because they knew only half of what was troubling him.

He hadn't told anyone about the Grim, not even Ron and Hermione, because he knew Ron would panic and Hermione would scoff. The fact remained, however, that it had now appeared twice, and both appearances had been followed by near-fatal accidents; the first time, he had nearly been run over by the Knight Bus; the second, fallen fifty feet from his broomstick. Was the Grim going to haunt him until he actually died? Was he going to spend the

rest of his life looking over his shoulder for the beast?

And then there were the dementors. Harry felt sick and humiliated every time he thought of them. Everyone said the dementors were horrible, but no one else collapsed every time they went near one. No one else heard echoes in their head of their dying parents.

Because Harry knew who that screaming voice belonged to now. He had heard her words, heard them over and over again during the night hours in the hospital wing while he lay awake, staring at the strips of moonlight on the ceiling. When the dementors approached him, he heard the last moments of his mother's life, her attempts to protect him, Harry, from Lord Voldemort, and Voldemort's laughter before he murdered her. . . . Harry dozed fitfully, sinking into dreams full of clammy, rotted hands and petrified pleading, jerking awake to dwell again on his mother's voice.

It was a relief to return to the noise and bustle of the main school on Monday, where he was forced to think about other things, even if he had to endure Draco Malfoy's taunting. Malfoy was almost beside himself with glee at Gryffindor's defeat. He had finally taken off his bandages, and celebrated having the full use of both arms again by doing spirited imitations of Harry falling off his broom. Malfoy spent much of their next Potions class doing dementor imitations across the dungeon; Ron finally cracked and flung a large, slippery crocodile heart at Malfoy, which hit him in the face and caused Snape to take fifty points from Gryffindor.

"If Snape's teaching Defense Against the Dark Arts again, I'm skiving off," said Ron as they headed toward Lupin's classroom after lunch. "Check who's in there, Hermione."

Hermione peered around the classroom door.

"It's okay!"

Professor Lupin was back at work. It certainly looked as though he had been ill. His old robes were hanging more loosely on him and there were dark shadows beneath his eyes; nevertheless, he smiled at the class as they took their seats, and they burst at once into an explosion of complaints about Snape's behavior while Lupin had been ill.

“It’s not fair, he was only filling in, why should he give us homework?”

“We don’t know anything about werewolves —”

“— two rolls of parchment!”

“Did you tell Professor Snape we haven’t covered them yet?” Lupin asked, frowning slightly.

The babble broke out again.

“Yes, but he said we were really behind —”

“— he wouldn’t listen —”

“— *two rolls of parchment!*”

Professor Lupin smiled at the look of indignation on every face.

“Don’t worry. I’ll speak to Professor Snape. You don’t have to do the essay.”

“Oh *no*,” said Hermione, looking very disappointed. “I’ve already finished it!”

They had a very enjoyable lesson. Professor Lupin had brought along a glass box containing a hinkypunk, a little one-legged creature who looked as though he were made of wisps of smoke, rather frail and harmless-looking.

“Lures travelers into bogs,” said Professor Lupin as they took notes. “You notice the lantern dangling from his hand? Hops ahead — people follow the light — then —”

The hinkypunk made a horrible squelching noise against the glass.

When the bell rang, everyone gathered up their things and headed for the door, Harry among them, but —

“Wait a moment, Harry,” Lupin called. “I’d like a word.”

Harry doubled back and watched Professor Lupin covering the hinkypunk’s box with a cloth.

“I heard about the match,” said Lupin, turning back to his desk and starting to pile books into his briefcase, “and I’m sorry about your broomstick. Is

there any chance of fixing it?”

“No,” said Harry. “The tree smashed it to bits.”

Lupin sighed.

“They planted the Whomping Willow the same year that I arrived at Hogwarts. People used to play a game, trying to get near enough to touch the trunk. In the end, a boy called Davey Gudgeon nearly lost an eye, and we were forbidden to go near it. No broomstick would have a chance.”

“Did you hear about the dementors too?” said Harry with difficulty.

Lupin looked at him quickly.

“Yes, I did. I don’t think any of us have seen Professor Dumbledore that angry. They have been growing restless for some time . . . furious at his refusal to let them inside the grounds. . . . I suppose they were the reason you fell?”

“Yes,” said Harry. He hesitated, and then the question he had to ask burst from him before he could stop himself. “*Why?* Why do they affect me like that? Am I just — ?”

“It has nothing to do with weakness,” said Professor Lupin sharply, as though he had read Harry’s mind. “The dementors affect you worse than the others because there are horrors in your past that the others don’t have.”

A ray of wintery sunlight fell across the classroom, illuminating Lupin’s gray hairs and the lines on his young face.

“Dementors are among the foulest creatures that walk this earth. They infest the darkest, filthiest places, they glory in decay and despair, they drain peace, hope, and happiness out of the air around them. Even Muggles feel their presence, though they can’t see them. Get too near a dementor and every good feeling, every happy memory will be sucked out of you. If it can, the dementor will feed on you long enough to reduce you to something like itself . . . soulless and evil. You’ll be left with nothing but the worst experiences of your life. And the worst that happened to *you*, Harry, is enough to make anyone fall off their broom. You have nothing to feel ashamed of.”

“When they get near me —” Harry stared at Lupin’s desk, his throat tight. “I can hear Voldemort murdering my mum.”

Lupin made a sudden motion with his arm as though to grip Harry’s shoulder, but thought better of it. There was a moment’s silence, then —

“Why did they have to come to the match?” said Harry bitterly.

“They’re getting hungry,” said Lupin coolly, shutting his briefcase with a snap. “Dumbledore won’t let them into the school, so their supply of human prey has dried up. . . . I don’t think they could resist the large crowd around the Quidditch field. All that excitement . . . emotions running high . . . it was their idea of a feast.”

“Azkaban must be terrible,” Harry muttered. Lupin nodded grimly.

“The fortress is set on a tiny island, way out to sea, but they don’t need walls and water to keep the prisoners in, not when they’re all trapped inside their own heads, incapable of a single cheerful thought. Most of them go mad within weeks.”

“But Sirius Black escaped from them,” Harry said slowly. “He got away. . . .”

Lupin’s briefcase slipped from the desk; he had to stoop quickly to catch it.

“Yes,” he said, straightening up, “Black must have found a way to fight them. I wouldn’t have believed it possible. . . . Dementors are supposed to drain a wizard of his powers if he is left with them too long. . . .”

“*You* made that dementor on the train back off,” said Harry suddenly.

“There are — certain defenses one can use,” said Lupin. “But there was only one dementor on the train. The more there are, the more difficult it becomes to resist.”

“What defenses?” said Harry at once. “Can you teach me?”

“I don’t pretend to be an expert at fighting dementors, Harry . . . quite the contrary. . . .”

“But if the dementors come to another Quidditch match, I need to be able to fight them —”

Lupin looked into Harry's determined face, hesitated, then said, "Well . . . all right. I'll try and help. But it'll have to wait until next term, I'm afraid. I have a lot to do before the holidays. I chose a very inconvenient time to fall ill."

What with the promise of anti-dementor lessons from Lupin, the thought that he might never have to hear his mother's death again, and the fact that Ravenclaw flattened Hufflepuff in their Quidditch match at the end of November, Harry's mood took a definite upturn. Gryffindor were not out of the running after all, although they could not afford to lose another match. Wood became repossessed of his manic energy, and worked his team as hard as ever in the chilly haze of rain that persisted into December. Harry saw no hint of a dementor within the grounds. Dumbledore's anger seemed to be keeping them at their stations at the entrances.

Two weeks before the end of the term, the sky lightened suddenly to a dazzling, opaline white and the muddy grounds were revealed one morning covered in glittering frost. Inside the castle, there was a buzz of Christmas in the air. Professor Flitwick, the Charms teacher, had already decorated his classroom with shimmering lights that turned out to be real, fluttering fairies. The students were all happily discussing their plans for the holidays. Both Ron and Hermione had decided to remain at Hogwarts, and though Ron said it was because he couldn't stand two weeks with Percy, and Hermione insisted she needed to use the library, Harry wasn't fooled; they were doing it to keep him company, and he was very grateful.

To everyone's delight except Harry's, there was to be another Hogsmeade trip on the very last weekend of the term.

"We can do all our Christmas shopping there!" said Hermione. "Mum and Dad would really love those Toothflossing Stringmints from Honeydukes!"

Resigned to the fact that he would be the only third year staying behind again, Harry borrowed a copy of *Which Broomstick* from Wood, and decided to spend the day reading up on the different makes. He had been riding one of the school brooms at team practice, an ancient Shooting Star, which was very slow and jerky; he definitely needed a new broom of his own.

On the Saturday morning of the Hogsmeade trip, Harry bid good-bye to Ron and Hermione, who were wrapped in cloaks and scarves, then turned up the marble staircase alone, and headed back toward Gryffindor Tower. Snow had started to fall outside the windows, and the castle was very still and quiet.

“Psst — Harry!”

He turned, halfway along the third-floor corridor, to see Fred and George peering out at him from behind a statue of a humpbacked, one-eyed witch.

“What are you doing?” said Harry curiously. “How come you’re not going to Hogsmeade?”

“We’ve come to give you a bit of festive cheer before we go,” said Fred, with a mysterious wink. “Come in here. . . .”

He nodded toward an empty classroom to the left of the one-eyed statue. Harry followed Fred and George inside. George closed the door quietly and then turned, beaming, to look at Harry.

“Early Christmas present for you, Harry,” he said.

Fred pulled something from inside his cloak with a flourish and laid it on one of the desks. It was a large, square, very worn piece of parchment with nothing written on it. Harry, suspecting one of Fred and George’s jokes, stared at it.

“What’s that supposed to be?”

“This, Harry, is the secret of our success,” said George, patting the parchment fondly.

“It’s a wrench, giving it to you,” said Fred, “but we decided last night, your need’s greater than ours.”

“Anyway, we know it by heart,” said George. “We bequeath it to you. We don’t really need it anymore.”

“And what do I need with a bit of old parchment?” said Harry.

“A bit of old parchment!” said Fred, closing his eyes with a grimace as though Harry had mortally offended him. “Explain, George.”

“Well . . . when we were in our first year, Harry — young, carefree, and innocent —”

Harry snorted. He doubted whether Fred and George had ever been innocent.

“— well, more innocent than we are now — we got into a spot of bother with Filch.”

“We let off a Dungbomb in the corridor and it upset him for some reason —”

“So he hauled us off to his office and started threatening us with the usual —”

“— detention —”

“— disembowelment —”

“— and we couldn’t help noticing a drawer in one of his filing cabinets marked *Confiscated and Highly Dangerous*.”

“Don’t tell me —” said Harry, starting to grin.

“Well, what would you’ve done?” said Fred. “George caused a diversion by dropping another Dungbomb, I whipped the drawer open and grabbed — *this*.”

“It’s not as bad as it sounds, you know,” said George. “We don’t reckon Filch ever found out how to work it. He probably suspected what it was, though, or he wouldn’t have confiscated it.”

“And you know how to work it?”

“Oh yes,” said Fred, smirking. “This little beauty’s taught us more than all the teachers in this school.”

“You’re winding me up,” said Harry, looking at the ragged old bit of parchment.

“Oh, are we?” said George.

He took out his wand, touched the parchment lightly, and said, “*I solemnly swear that I am up to no good.*”

And at once, thin ink lines began to spread like a spider's web from the point that George's wand had touched. They joined each other, they crisscrossed, they fanned into every corner of the parchment; then words began to blossom across the top, great, curly green words, that proclaimed:

*Messrs. Moony, Wormtail, Padfoot, and ProngsPurveyors of Aids to
Magical Mischief-Makersare proud to present*

THE MARAUDER'S MAP

It was a map showing every detail of the Hogwarts castle and grounds. But the truly remarkable thing were the tiny ink dots moving around it, each labeled with a name in minuscule writing. Astounded, Harry bent over it. A labeled dot in the top left corner showed that Professor Dumbledore was pacing his study; the caretaker's cat, Mrs. Norris, was prowling the second floor; and Peeves the Poltergeist was currently bouncing around the trophy room. And as Harry's eyes traveled up and down the familiar corridors, he noticed something else.

This map showed a set of passages he had never entered. And many of them seemed to lead —

"Right into Hogsmeade," said Fred, tracing one of them with his finger. "There are seven in all. Now, Filch knows about these four" — he pointed them out — "but we're sure we're the only ones who know about *these*. Don't bother with the one behind the mirror on the fourth floor. We used it until last winter, but it's caved in — completely blocked. And we don't reckon anyone's ever used this one, because the Whomping Willow's planted right over the entrance. But this one here, this one leads right into the cellar of Honeydukes. We've used it loads of times. And as you might've noticed, the entrance is right outside this room, through that one-eyed old crone's hump."

"Moony, Wormtail, Padfoot, and Prongs," sighed George, patting the heading of the map. "We owe them so much."

"Noble men, working tirelessly to help a new generation of lawbreakers," said Fred solemnly.

"Right," said George briskly. "Don't forget to wipe it after you've used it

—”

“— or anyone can read it,” Fred said warningly.

“Just tap it again and say, ‘Mischief managed!’ And it’ll go blank.”

“So, young Harry,” said Fred, in an uncanny impersonation of Percy, “mind you behave yourself.”

“See you in Honeydukes,” said George, winking.

They left the room, both smirking in a satisfied sort of way.

Harry stood there, gazing at the miraculous map. He watched the tiny ink Mrs. Norris turn left and pause to sniff at something on the floor. If Filch really didn’t know . . . he wouldn’t have to pass the dementors at all. . . .

But even as he stood there, flooded with excitement, something Harry had once heard Mr. Weasley say came floating out of his memory.

Never trust anything that can think for itself, if you can’t see where it keeps its brain.

This map was one of those dangerous magical objects Mr. Weasley had been warning against. . . . *Aids for Magical Mischief-Makers* . . . but then, Harry reasoned, he only wanted to use it to get into Hogsmeade, it wasn’t as though he wanted to steal anything or attack anyone . . . and Fred and George had been using it for years without anything horrible happening. . . .

Harry traced the secret passage to Honeydukes with his finger.

Then, quite suddenly, as though following orders, he rolled up the map, stuffed it inside his robes, and hurried to the door of the classroom. He opened it a couple of inches. There was no one outside. Very carefully, he edged out of the room and behind the statue of the one-eyed witch.

What did he have to do? He pulled out the map again and saw, to his astonishment, that a new ink figure had appeared upon it, labeled *Harry Potter*. This figure was standing exactly where the real Harry was standing, about halfway down the third-floor corridor. Harry watched carefully. His little ink self appeared to be tapping the witch with his minute wand. Harry quickly took out his real wand and tapped the statue. Nothing happened. He

looked back at the map. The tiniest speech bubble had appeared next to his figure. The word inside said, “*Dissendium*.”

“*Dissendium!*” Harry whispered, tapping the stone witch again.

At once, the statue’s hump opened wide enough to admit a fairly thin person. Harry glanced quickly up and down the corridor, then tucked the map away again, hoisted himself into the hole headfirst, and pushed himself forward.

He slid a considerable way down what felt like a stone slide, then landed on cold, damp earth. He stood up, looking around. It was pitch dark. He held up his wand, muttered, “*Lumos!*” and saw that he was in a very narrow, low, earthy passageway. He raised the map, tapped it with the tip of his wand, and muttered, “*Mischief managed!*” The map went blank at once. He folded it carefully, tucked it inside his robes, then, heart beating fast, both excited and apprehensive, he set off.

The passage twisted and turned, more like the burrow of a giant rabbit than anything else. Harry hurried along it, stumbling now and then on the uneven floor, holding his wand out in front of him.

It took ages, but Harry had the thought of Honeydukes to sustain him. After what felt like an hour, the passage began to rise. Panting, Harry sped up, his face hot, his feet very cold.

Ten minutes later, he came to the foot of some worn stone steps, which rose out of sight above him. Careful not to make any noise, Harry began to climb. A hundred steps, two hundred steps, he lost count as he climbed, watching his feet. . . . Then, without warning, his head hit something hard.

It seemed to be a trapdoor. Harry stood there, massaging the top of his head, listening. He couldn’t hear any sounds above him. Very slowly, he pushed the trapdoor open and peered over the edge.

He was in a cellar, which was full of wooden crates and boxes. Harry climbed out of the trapdoor and replaced it — it blended so perfectly with the dusty floor that it was impossible to tell it was there. Harry crept slowly toward the wooden staircase that led upstairs. Now he could definitely hear

voices, not to mention the tinkle of a bell and the opening and shutting of a door.

Wondering what he ought to do, he suddenly heard a door open much closer at hand; somebody was about to come downstairs.

“And get another box of Jelly Slugs, dear, they’ve nearly cleaned us out —” said a woman’s voice.

A pair of feet was coming down the staircase. Harry leapt behind an enormous crate and waited for the footsteps to pass. He heard the man shifting boxes against the opposite wall. He might not get another chance —

Quickly and silently, Harry dodged out from his hiding place and climbed the stairs; looking back, he saw an enormous backside and shiny bald head, buried in a box. Harry reached the door at the top of the stairs, slipped through it, and found himself behind the counter of Honeydukes — he ducked, crept sideways, and then straightened up.

Honeydukes was so crowded with Hogwarts students that no one looked twice at Harry. He edged among them, looking around, and suppressed a laugh as he imagined the look that would spread over Dudley’s piggy face if he could see where Harry was now.

There were shelves upon shelves of the most succulent-looking sweets imaginable. Creamy chunks of nougat, shimmering pink squares of coconut ice, fat, honey-colored toffees; hundreds of different kinds of chocolate in neat rows; there was a large barrel of Every Flavor Beans, and another of Fizzing Whizbees, the levitating sherbet balls that Ron had mentioned; along yet another wall were “Special Effects” sweets: Drooble’s Best Blowing Gum (which filled a room with bluebell-colored bubbles that refused to pop for days), the strange, splintery Toothflossing Stringmints, tiny black Pepper Imps (“Breathe fire for your friends!”), Ice Mice (“Hear your teeth chatter and squeak!”), peppermint creams shaped like toads (“Hop realistically in the stomach!”), fragile sugar-spun quills, and exploding bonbons.

Harry squeezed himself through a crowd of sixth years and saw a sign hanging in the farthest corner of the shop (UNUSUAL TASTES). Ron and Hermione were standing underneath it, examining a tray of blood-flavored

lollipops. Harry sneaked up behind them.

“Ugh, no, Harry won’t want one of those, they’re for vampires, I expect,” Hermione was saying.

“How about these?” said Ron, shoving a jar of Cockroach Clusters under Hermione’s nose.

“Definitely not,” said Harry.

Ron nearly dropped the jar.

“*Harry!*” squealed Hermione. “What are you doing here? How — how did you — ?”

“Wow!” said Ron, looking very impressed, “you’ve learned to Apparate!”

“Course I haven’t,” said Harry. He dropped his voice so that none of the sixth years could hear him and told them all about the Marauder’s Map.

“How come Fred and George never gave it to *me!*” said Ron, outraged. “I’m their brother!”

“But Harry isn’t going to keep it!” said Hermione, as though the idea were ludicrous. “He’s going to hand it in to Professor McGonagall, aren’t you, Harry?”

“No, I’m not!” said Harry.

“Are you mad?” said Ron, goggling at Hermione. “Hand in something that good?”

“If I hand it in, I’ll have to say where I got it! Filch would know Fred and George had nicked it!”

“But what about Sirius Black?” Hermione hissed. “He could be using one of the passages on that map to get into the castle! The teachers have got to know!”

“He can’t be getting in through a passage,” said Harry quickly. “There are seven secret tunnels on the map, right? Fred and George reckon Filch already knows about four of them. And of the other three — one of them’s caved in, so no one can get through it. One of them’s got the Whomping Willow

planted over the entrance, so you can't get out of it. And the one I just came through — well — it's really hard to see the entrance to it down in the cellar, so unless he knew it was there . . .”

Harry hesitated. What if Black did know the passage was there? Ron, however, cleared his throat significantly, and pointed to a notice pasted on the inside of the sweetshop door.

————— BY ORDER OF —————

THE MINISTRY OF MAGIC

Customers are reminded that until further notice, dementors will be patrolling the streets of Hogsmeade every night after sundown. This measure has been put in place for the safety of Hogsmeade residents and will be lifted upon the recapture of Sirius Black. It is therefore advisable that you complete your shopping well before nightfall.

Merry Christmas!

“See?” said Ron quietly. “I'd like to see Black try and break into Honeydukes with dementors swarming all over the village. Anyway, Hermione, the Honeydukes owners would hear a break-in, wouldn't they? They live over the shop!”

“Yes, but — but —” Hermione seemed to be struggling to find another problem. “Look, Harry still shouldn't be coming into Hogsmeade. He hasn't got a signed form! If anyone finds out, he'll be in so much trouble! And it's not nightfall yet — what if Sirius Black turns up today? Now?”

“He'd have a job spotting Harry in this,” said Ron, nodding through the mullioned windows at the thick, swirling snow. “Come on, Hermione, it's Christmas. Harry deserves a break.”

Hermione bit her lip, looking extremely worried.

“Are you going to report me?” Harry asked her, grinning.

“Oh — of course not — but honestly, Harry —”

“Seen the Fizzing Whizbees, Harry?” said Ron, grabbing him and leading him over to their barrel. “And the Jelly Slugs? And the Acid Pops? Fred gave

me one of those when I was seven — it burnt a hole right through my tongue. I remember Mum walloping him with her broomstick.” Ron stared broodingly into the Acid Pop box. “Reckon Fred’d take a bit of Cockroach Cluster if I told him they were peanuts?”

When Ron and Hermione had paid for all their sweets, the three of them left Honeydukes for the blizzard outside.

Hogsmeade looked like a Christmas card; the little thatched cottages and shops were all covered in a layer of crisp snow; there were holly wreaths on the doors and strings of enchanted candles hanging in the trees.

Harry shivered; unlike the other two, he didn’t have his cloak. They headed up the street, heads bowed against the wind, Ron and Hermione shouting through their scarves.

“That’s the post office —”

“Zonko’s is up there —”

“We could go up to the Shrieking Shack —”

“Tell you what,” said Ron, his teeth chattering, “shall we go for a butterbeer in the Three Broomsticks?”

Harry was more than willing; the wind was fierce and his hands were freezing, so they crossed the road, and in a few minutes were entering the tiny inn.

It was extremely crowded, noisy, warm, and smoky. A curvy sort of woman with a pretty face was serving a bunch of rowdy warlocks up at the bar.

“That’s Madam Rosmerta,” said Ron. “I’ll get the drinks, shall I?” he added, going slightly red.

Harry and Hermione made their way to the back of the room, where there was a small, vacant table between the window and a handsome Christmas tree, which stood next to the fireplace. Ron came back five minutes later, carrying three foaming tankards of hot butterbeer.

“Merry Christmas!” he said happily, raising his tankard.

Harry drank deeply. It was the most delicious thing he’d ever tasted and

seemed to heat every bit of him from the inside.

A sudden breeze ruffled his hair. The door of the Three Broomsticks had opened again. Harry looked over the rim of his tankard and choked.

Professors McGonagall and Flitwick had just entered the pub with a flurry of snowflakes, shortly followed by Hagrid, who was deep in conversation with a portly man in a lime-green bowler hat and a pinstriped cloak — Cornelius Fudge, Minister of Magic.

In an instant, Ron and Hermione had both placed hands on the top of Harry's head and forced him off his stool and under the table. Dripping with butterbeer and crouching out of sight, Harry clutched his empty tankard and watched the teachers' and Fudge's feet move toward the bar, pause, then turn and walk right toward him.

Somewhere above him, Hermione whispered, "*Mobiliarbus!*"

The Christmas tree beside their table rose a few inches off the ground, drifted sideways, and landed with a soft thump right in front of their table, hiding them from view. Staring through the dense lower branches, Harry saw four sets of chair legs move back from the table right beside theirs, then heard the grunts and sighs of the teachers and minister as they sat down.

Next he saw another pair of feet, wearing sparkly turquoise high heels, and heard a woman's voice.

"A small gillywater —"

"Mine," said Professor McGonagall's voice.

"Four pints of mulled mead —"

"Ta, Rosmerta," said Hagrid.

"A cherry syrup and soda with ice and umbrella —"

"Mmm!" said Professor Flitwick, smacking his lips.

"So you'll be the red currant rum, Minister."

"Thank you, Rosmerta, m'dear," said Fudge's voice. "Lovely to see you again, I must say. Have one yourself, won't you? Come and join us. . . ."

“Well, thank you very much, Minister.”

Harry watched the glittering heels march away and back again. His heart was pounding uncomfortably in his throat. Why hadn't it occurred to him that this was the last weekend of term for the teachers too? And how long were they going to sit there? He needed time to sneak back into Honeydukes if he wanted to return to school tonight. . . . Hermione's leg gave a nervous twitch next to him.

“So, what brings you to this neck of the woods, Minister?” came Madam Rosmerta's voice.

Harry saw the lower part of Fudge's thick body twist in his chair as though he were checking for eavesdroppers. Then he said in a quiet voice, “What else, m'dear, but Sirius Black? I daresay you heard what happened up at the school at Halloween?”

“I did hear a rumor,” admitted Madam Rosmerta.

“Did you tell the whole pub, Hagrid?” said Professor McGonagall exasperatedly.

“Do you think Black's still in the area, Minister?” whispered Madam Rosmerta.

“I'm sure of it,” said Fudge shortly.

“You know that the dementors have searched my pub twice?” said Madam Rosmerta, a slight edge to her voice. “Scared all my customers away. . . . It's very bad for business, Minister.”

“Rosmerta, m'dear, I don't like them any more than you do,” said Fudge uncomfortably. “Necessary precaution . . . unfortunate, but there you are. . . . I've just met some of them. They're in a fury against Dumbledore — he won't let them inside the castle grounds.”

“I should think not,” said Professor McGonagall sharply. “How are we supposed to teach with those horrors floating around?”

“Hear, hear!” squeaked tiny Professor Flitwick, whose feet were dangling a foot from the ground.

“All the same,” demurred Fudge, “they are here to protect you all from something much worse. . . . We all know what Black’s capable of. . . .”

“Do you know, I still have trouble believing it,” said Madam Rosmerta thoughtfully. “Of all the people to go over to the Dark Side, Sirius Black was the last I’d have thought . . . I mean, I remember him when he was a boy at Hogwarts. If you’d told me then what he was going to become, I’d have said you’d had too much mead.”

“You don’t know the half of it, Rosmerta,” said Fudge gruffly. “The worst he did isn’t widely known.”

“The worst?” said Madam Rosmerta, her voice alive with curiosity. “Worse than murdering all those poor people, you mean?”

“I certainly do,” said Fudge.

“I can’t believe that. What could possibly be worse?”

“You say you remember him at Hogwarts, Rosmerta,” murmured Professor McGonagall. “Do you remember who his best friend was?”

“Naturally,” said Madam Rosmerta, with a small laugh. “Never saw one without the other, did you? The number of times I had them in here — ooh, they used to make me laugh. Quite the double act, Sirius Black and James Potter!”

Harry dropped his tankard with a loud clunk. Ron kicked him.

“Precisely,” said Professor McGonagall. “Black and Potter. Ringleaders of their little gang. Both very bright, of course — exceptionally bright, in fact — but I don’t think we’ve ever had such a pair of troublemakers —”

“I dunno,” chuckled Hagrid. “Fred and George Weasley could give ’em a run fer their money.”

“You’d have thought Black and Potter were brothers!” chimed in Professor Flitwick. “Inseparable!”

“Of course they were,” said Fudge. “Potter trusted Black beyond all his other friends. Nothing changed when they left school. Black was best man when James married Lily. Then they named him godfather to Harry. Harry has

no idea, of course. You can imagine how the idea would torment him.”

“Because Black turned out to be in league with You-Know-Who?” whispered Madam Rosmerta.

“Worse even than that, m’dear. . . .” Fudge dropped his voice and proceeded in a sort of low rumble. “Not many people are aware that the Potters knew You-Know-Who was after them. Dumbledore, who was of course working tirelessly against You-Know-Who, had a number of useful spies. One of them tipped him off, and he alerted James and Lily at once. He advised them to go into hiding. Well, of course, You-Know-Who wasn’t an easy person to hide from. Dumbledore told them that their best chance was the Fidelius Charm.”

“How does that work?” said Madam Rosmerta, breathless with interest. Professor Flitwick cleared his throat.

“An immensely complex spell,” he said squeakily, “involving the magical concealment of a secret inside a single, living soul. The information is hidden inside the chosen person, or Secret-Keeper, and is henceforth impossible to find — unless, of course, the Secret-Keeper chooses to divulge it. As long as the Secret-Keeper refused to speak, You-Know-Who could search the village where Lily and James were staying for years and never find them, not even if he had his nose pressed against their sitting-room window!”

“So Black was the Potters’ Secret-Keeper?” whispered Madam Rosmerta.

“Naturally,” said Professor McGonagall. “James Potter told Dumbledore that Black would die rather than tell where they were, that Black was planning to go into hiding himself . . . and yet, Dumbledore remained worried. I remember him offering to be the Potters’ Secret-Keeper himself.”

“He suspected Black?” gasped Madam Rosmerta.

“He was sure that somebody close to the Potters had been keeping You-Know-Who informed of their movements,” said Professor McGonagall darkly. “Indeed, he had suspected for some time that someone on our side had turned traitor and was passing a lot of information to You-Know-Who.”

“But James Potter insisted on using Black?”

“He did,” said Fudge heavily. “And then, barely a week after the Fidelius Charm had been performed —”

“Black betrayed them?” breathed Madam Rosmerta.

“He did indeed. Black was tired of his double-agent role, he was ready to declare his support openly for You-Know-Who, and he seems to have planned this for the moment of the Potters’ death. But, as we all know, You-Know-Who met his downfall in little Harry Potter. Powers gone, horribly weakened, he fled. And this left Black in a very nasty position indeed. His master had fallen at the very moment when he, Black, had shown his true colors as a traitor. He had no choice but to run for it —”

“Filthy, stinkin’ turncoat!” Hagrid said, so loudly that half the bar went quiet.

“Shh!” said Professor McGonagall.

“I met him!” growled Hagrid. “I musta bin the last ter see him before he killed all them people! It was me what rescued Harry from Lily an’ James’s house after they was killed! Jus’ got him outta the ruins, poor little thing, with a great slash across his forehead, an’ his parents dead . . . an’ Sirius Black turns up, on that flyin’ motorbike he used ter ride. Never occurred ter me what he was doin’ there. I didn’ know he’d bin Lily an’ James’s Secret-Keeper. Thought he’d jus’ heard the news o’ You-Know-Who’s attack an’ come ter see what he could do. White an’ shakin’, he was. An’ yeh know what I did? I COMFORTED THE MURDERIN’ TRAITOR!” Hagrid roared.

“Hagrid, please!” said Professor McGonagall. “Keep your voice down!”

“How was I ter know he wasn’ upset abou’ Lily an’ James? It was You-Know-Who he cared abou’! An’ then he says, ‘Give Harry ter me, Hagrid, I’m his godfather, I’ll look after him —’ Ha! But I’d had me orders from Dumbledore, an’ I told Black no, Dumbledore said Harry was ter go ter his aunt an’ uncle’s. Black argued, but in the end he gave in. Told me ter take his motorbike ter get Harry there. ‘I won’t need it anymore,’ he says.

“I shoulda known there was somethin’ fishy goin’ on then. He loved that motorbike, what was he givin’ it ter me for? Why wouldn’ he need it

anymore? Fact was, it was too easy ter trace. Dumbledore knew he'd bin the Potters' Secret-Keeper. Black knew he was goin' ter have ter run fer it that night, knew it was a matter o' hours before the Ministry was after him.

"But what if I'd given Harry to him, eh? I bet he'd've pitched him off the bike halfway out ter sea. His bes' friends' son! But when a wizard goes over ter the Dark Side, there's nothin' and no one that matters to 'em anymore. . . ."

A long silence followed Hagrid's story. Then Madam Rosmerta said with some satisfaction, "But he didn't manage to disappear, did he? The Ministry of Magic caught up with him next day!"

"Alas, if only we had," said Fudge bitterly. "It was not we who found him. It was little Peter Pettigrew — another of the Potters' friends. Maddened by grief, no doubt, and knowing that Black had been the Potters' Secret-Keeper, he went after Black himself."

"Pettigrew . . . that fat little boy who was always tagging around after them at Hogwarts?" said Madam Rosmerta.

"Hero-worshipped Black and Potter," said Professor McGonagall. "Never quite in their league, talent-wise. I was often rather sharp with him. You can imagine how I — how I regret that now. . . ." She sounded as though she had a sudden head cold.

"There, now, Minerva," said Fudge kindly, "Pettigrew died a hero's death. Eyewitnesses — Muggles, of course, we wiped their memories later — told us how Pettigrew cornered Black. They say he was sobbing, 'Lily and James, Sirius! How could you?' And then he went for his wand. Well, of course, Black was quicker. Blew Pettigrew to smithereens. . . ."

Professor McGonagall blew her nose and said thickly, "Stupid boy . . . foolish boy . . . he was always hopeless at dueling . . . should have left it to the Ministry. . . ."

"I tell yeh, if I'd got ter Black before little Pettigrew did, I wouldn't've messed around with wands — I'd've ripped him limb — from — limb," Hagrid growled.

“You don’t know what you’re talking about, Hagrid,” said Fudge sharply. “Nobody but trained Hit Wizards from the Magical Law Enforcement Squad would have stood a chance against Black once he was cornered. I was Junior Minister in the Department of Magical Catastrophes at the time, and I was one of the first on the scene after Black murdered all those people. I — I will never forget it. I still dream about it sometimes. A crater in the middle of the street, so deep it had cracked the sewer below. Bodies everywhere. Muggles screaming. And Black standing there laughing, with what was left of Pettigrew in front of him . . . a heap of bloodstained robes and a few — a few fragments —”

Fudge’s voice stopped abruptly. There was the sound of five noses being blown.

“Well, there you have it, Rosmerta,” said Fudge thickly. “Black was taken away by twenty members of the Magical Law Enforcement Squad and Pettigrew received the Order of Merlin, First Class, which I think was some comfort to his poor mother. Black’s been in Azkaban ever since.”

Madam Rosmerta let out a long sigh.

“Is it true he’s mad, Minister?”

“I wish I could say that he was,” said Fudge slowly. “I certainly believe his master’s defeat unhinged him for a while. The murder of Pettigrew and all those Muggles was the action of a cornered and desperate man — cruel . . . pointless. Yet I met Black on my last inspection of Azkaban. You know, most of the prisoners in there sit muttering to themselves in the dark; there’s no sense in them . . . but I was shocked at how *normal* Black seemed. He spoke quite rationally to me. It was unnerving. You’d have thought he was merely bored — asked if I’d finished with my newspaper, cool as you please, said he missed doing the crossword. Yes, I was astounded at how little effect the dementors seemed to be having on him — and he was one of the most heavily guarded in the place, you know. Dementors outside his door day and night.”

“But what do you think he’s broken out to do?” said Madam Rosmerta. “Good gracious, Minister, he isn’t trying to rejoin You-Know-Who, is he?”

“I daresay that is his — er — eventual plan,” said Fudge evasively. “But

we hope to catch Black long before that. I must say, You-Know-Who alone and friendless is one thing . . . but give him back his most devoted servant, and I shudder to think how quickly he'll rise again. . . .”

There was a small chink of glass on wood. Someone had set down their glass.

“You know, Cornelius, if you're dining with the headmaster, we'd better head back up to the castle,” said Professor McGonagall.

One by one, the pairs of feet in front of Harry took the weight of their owners once more; hems of cloaks swung into sight, and Madam Rosemerta's glittering heels disappeared behind the bar. The door of the Three Broomsticks opened again, there was another flurry of snow, and the teachers had disappeared.

“Harry?”

Ron's and Hermione's faces appeared under the table. They were both staring at him, lost for words.